



The House of Chance and Mischief

Date

2008-10

Primary Maker

Renée Stout

Medium

Acrylic, latex paint, spray paint, plastic rhinestones, wood, glass, metal, varnish, collage, and found objects

Description

In her handmade assemblages, installations, and tableaux, the artist Renée Stout combines African American tradition and street culture with aspects of the theatrical and the carnivalesque. She often creates trompe-l'oeil moments within her works, employing techniques and experiences she gleaned as a sign painter that may lead the viewer to question which elements are real and which are artificial. The House of Chance and Mischief evokes and pursues this very uncertainty, mixing reality and fantasy. On the front panel of the sculpture, Stout painted a portrait of a man she had encountered on the street in her hometown of Washington, DC. On the back of the piece, she recorded, "The man on the front of this piece calls himself 'Hollywood.' People say he looks like George Clinton, but Hollywood has his own thing goin' on. He hangs at that funky (and I don't mean funky in a good way) diner around the corner from me. We meet at the House of Chance and Mischief." Stout assembled a number of found elements—among them, a wine crate, bottle caps, and turned wood posts (perhaps from railings)—into a towerlike form that evokes a funhouse or carnival game. Not only does the window on the front evoke such a game, but viewers are also invited to place a wish inside the assemblage through a hole on its right side. "Got something you want to confess?" Stout wrote above the opening. "Well it's time to unburden yourself at the House of Chance and Mischief. Just write your secret, wish or confession on a piece of paper and push it through the hole." In addition, references are made throughout the work—especially in the numbers that appear

on the back—to gambling, luck, and superstition. The Wellin Museum purchased The House of Chance and Mischief after the conclusion of the traveling exhibition Renée Stout: Tales of the Conjure Woman, which was on view at the Wellin in Fall 2015. (SOURCE: Alcauskas, INNOVATIVE APPROACHES, HONORED TRADITIONS, 2017) "The House of Chance and Mischief (2008-10) includes both traditional and contemporary renditions of Elegba. The painted male figure on the front of the sculpture is decked out in 1970s regalia, with a wide-brimmed zebra hat, oversize white sunglasses, and beads in his beard. A structure resembling a funhouse entrance rises above the painted base, framing a bust of Elegba with a red cross at the top. To the right is a palm with little male bobble-head figures attached to the fingertips, like the Mano Poderosa of Mexican Christian art. The rest of the work is collaged with scraps of decoratively painted found wood and objects such as a top, playing cards, and numbers. All of these elements are particular to Stout's self-styled tools of divination." (SOURCE: A. M. Weaver, "Formal Divination: Renee Stout," SCULPTURE v. 36 no. 2 (March 2017), p. 53).

Dimensions

Overall: 77 × 28 1/16 × 20 in. (195.6 × 71.3 × 50.8 cm)